

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

A Graphic Tale of Unspeakable Horror by the Author of *The Vampire Lestat*

INNOVATION™

Anne Rice's
THE MASTER OF
RAMPLING
GATE™



DAVE BRYANT © 1997



Anne Rice's
THE MASTER OF RAMPLING GATE™

In Southern England during the late 19th Century, siblings Richard and Julie Rampling visit their family's long-vacant ancestral mansion, only to discover the horrible secret of the old castle: an ancient vampire who has held sway over their family and the entire Village of Rampling for centuries!

Best-selling author **Anne Rice** creates this graphic tale of romance and unspeakable horror -- adapted into a full-color graphic album format by **James Schlosser** and beautifully painted by artist **Colleen Doran**.

THE MASTER OF RAMPLING GATE
TM & © 1991 Anne O'Brien Rice.
Front cover art © 1991 John Bolton
Adaptation & art © 1991 Innovative Corp.
All rights reserved.

\$6.95 (U.S.) \$7.95 (CAN.)

ILLUSTRATED FICTION



SPRING 1898:

RAMPLING GATE.

HOME OF MY ANCESTORS FOR
OVER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.

BUT WHY HAD FATHER NEVER
TAKEN US THERE ?

AND WHY ON HIS DEATHBED HAD HE
TOLD MY BROTHER THAT RAMPLING GATE
MUST BE TORN DOWN, STONE BY STONE ?

David





WAS IT ANY WONDER THAT, NOT TWO MONTHS AFTER FATHER'S PASSING, WE WERE HEADED SOUTH TO VISIT THE MYSTERIOUS RAMPLING GATE?

SURELY FATHER WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD.

HOW COULD WE DESTROY THE OLD PLACE WHEN WE HAD NEVER SEEN IT?

THE EVENING BEFORE, WE
LOOKED AT OLD PICTURES
OF RAMPLING GATE--



--RECALLING THE NIGHT FATHER HAD TAKEN
THOSE PICTURES DOWN OFF THE WALLS.

WE WERE BOTH CHILDREN
WHEN IT HAPPENED--



--BUT WE NEVER FORGOT THE
STRANGE INCIDENT IN
VICTORIA STATION,
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, THAT
PRECIPITATED FATHER'S
UNCHARACTERISTIC RAGE.

WE HAD GONE THERE
AFTER SUPPER TO SAY
FAREWELL TO A SCHOOL
FRIEND OF RICHARD'S



FATHER CAUGHT A GLIMPSE,
QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY, OF A
YOUNG MAN AT THE LIGHTED
WINDOW OF AN INCOMING TRAIN.



LATER THAT NIGHT, FATHER AND MOTHER
QUARRELLED AND WE CROPT OUT OF OUR
ROOMS TO LISTEN ON THE STAIRS.



WE WERE STILL UNABLE TO SHED ANY
LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT, THOUGH.

NOWHERE IN ANY OF THE OLD
PICTURES OR PAPERS PER-
TAINING TO THE HOUSE COULD
WE FIND ANYTHING AMISS.



I'VE NEVER
FIGURED OUT WHAT
TO MAKE OF THAT
NIGHT--

"AND NOW THIS
COMMAND TO DESTROY THE
PLACE--IT JUST DOESN'T
MAKE ANY SENSE--

WE MUST SEE THE
HOUSE FOR OURSELVES
BEFORE WE ALLOW IT TO
BE TORN DOWN.



EXACTLY! AND I
HAVE ALREADY SENT A TELEGRAM
TO THE HOUSEKEEPER, ADVISING
HER OF OUR VISIT.

AFTER ALL, DON'T WE
OWE IT TO THE OTHERS, JULIE?
UNCLE BAXTER WHO SPENT THE
LAST OF HIS FORTUNE RESTORING
THE PLACE, AND EVEN THIS OLD MRS.
BLESSINGTON WHO HAS KEPT
RAMPLING GATE FOR THE FAMILY
ALL THESE YEARS?





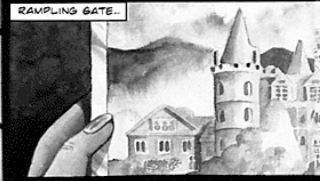
NOW THAT WE'D BEGUN OUR JOURNEY, IT WAS TOO DREADFUL TO THINK OF FATHER'S EXHORTATION--

--AND TOO EXHILARATING TO THINK OF THE HOUSE ITSELF.



Newbury

RAMPLING GATE..



Amesbury
Stonehenge
Great Wixford
Milton
Salisbury
Winchester
Mottisfont
Romsey
Breamore
Rushmore
Cranborne
South

Reading

THE GREAT SILENCE



THERE WAS SOMETHING
ALMOST ILLICIT ABOUT
THE EXCITEMENT I FELT.



I SAW, IN MY MIND'S
EYE, THAT STRANGE
YOUNG MAN AGAIN.

SARREN

BUT FATHER HAD
BEEN SO ANGRY.



--I FELT AN UNMISTAKABLE
PANG OF GUILT.

THE GREAT SILENCE





IT IS AN
ENCHANTED
PLACE.

OH, RICHARD,
WE ARE HOME!



RAMPINGS AT RAMPING
GATE AGAIN-- I CAN'T TELL
YOU WHAT A JOYFUL DAY
THIS IS FOR ME!

YOU
MUST BE MRS.
BLESSINGTON,
THE HOUSE-
KEEPER.



WHY OF
COURSE, SIR,
WHO ELSE MIGHT
I BE?

NOW COME
IN AND MAKE YOUR-
SELVES RIGHT AT
HOME!

WE GOT YOUR
ROOMS READY AS SOON
AS YOU CABLED FROM
LONDON!

WE'LL SERVE
DINNER AS SOON AS
YOU'VE HAD A CHANCE TO
FRESHEN UP.



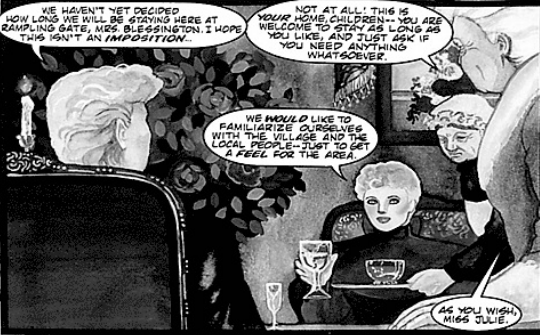
THE HOUSE IS SIMPLY
FASCINATING!

UNCLE BAXTER
HAD ALMOST COMPLETED THE
RESTORATION—AND WAS DOING
A SPLENDID JOB OF IT—
AT THE TIME OF HIS
DEATH.



IF YOU SPY A
THING OUT OF PLACE IN
THIS HOUSE, YOU'RE TO
TELL ME AT ONCE...

ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN
QUITE BLIND FOR MANY YEARS
IT WOULD BE THE *EXCEPTION*. I
ASSURE YOU, *NOT* THE RULE.



WE HAVEN'T YET DECIDED HOW LONG WE WILL BE STAYING HERE AT RAMPLING GATE, MRS. BLESSINGTON. I HOPE THIS ISN'T AN IMPOSITION...

NOT AT ALL! THIS IS YOUR HOME, CHILDREN-- YOU ARE WELCOME TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE, AND JUST ASK IF YOU NEED ANYTHING WHATSOEVER.

WE WOULD LIKE TO FAMILIARIZE OURSELVES WITH THE VILLAGE AND THE LOCAL PEOPLE-- JUST TO GET A FEEL FOR THE AREA.

AS YOU WISH, MISS JULIE.



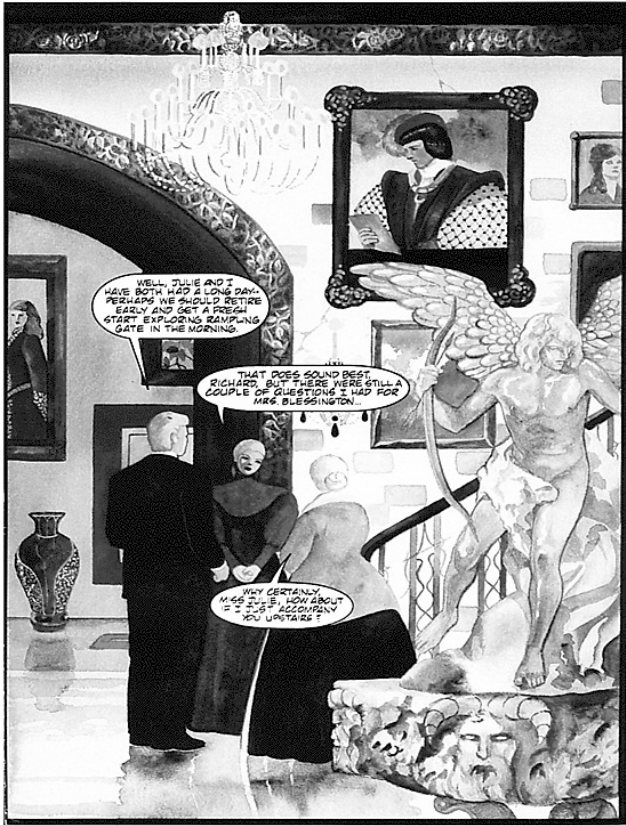
ALSO, IF ANY OF UNCLE BAXTER'S PAPERS REMAIN, I WOULD LIKE A CHANCE TO LOOK THROUGH THEM.

YOU WILL FIND ALL OF YOUR UNCLE BAXTER'S NOTES AND RECORDS IN THE LIBRARY, OF COURSE--

MIGHT I ASK WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING TO FIND?

NOTHING IN PARTICULAR, MRS. BLESSINGTON--

--I AM MERELY INTERESTED IN LEARNING AS MUCH AS I CAN ABOUT THIS HOUSE AND MY FAMILY'S HISTORY WHILE WE ARE HERE.



WELL, JULIE AND I
HAVE BOTH HAD A LONG DAY.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD RETIRE
EARLY AND GET A FRESH
START EXPLORING RAMPLING
GATE IN THE MORNING.

THAT DOES SOUND BEST,
RICHARD, BUT THERE WERE STILL A
COUPLE OF QUESTIONS I HAD FOR
MRS. BLESSINGTON...

WHY CERTAINLY,
MRS. JULIE. HOW ABOUT
IF I JUST ACCOMPANY
YOU UPSTAIRS?



I MANAGED A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE INCIDENT WITH THE HANDSOME YOUNG MAN WHOM MY FATHER, IN ANGER, HAD CALLED THE *MASTER OF RAMPLING GATE*.

HANDSOME,
WAS HE ?



SO THERE HAVE
BEEN NO INTRUDERS IN
THIS HOUSE THEN, MRS.
BLESSINGTON ?

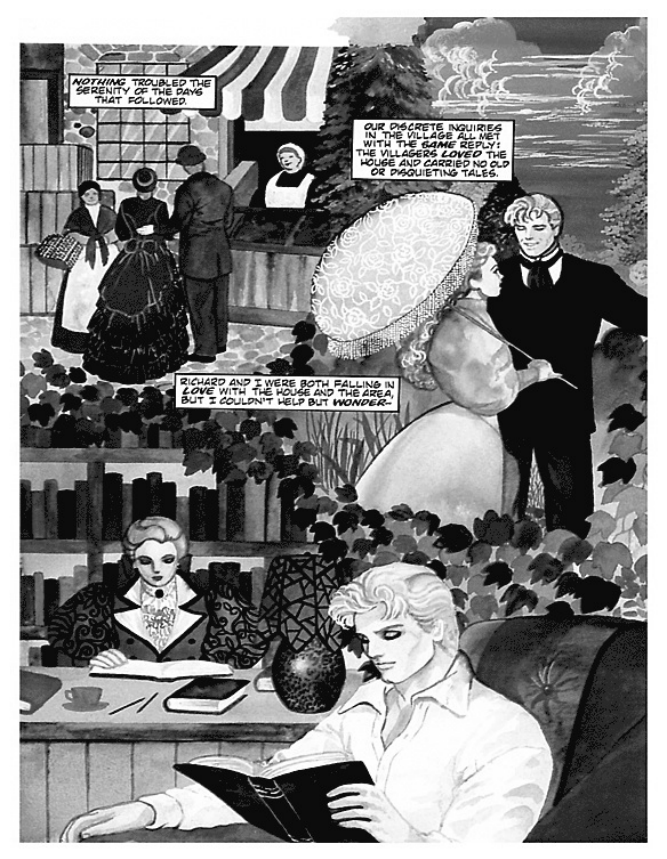
NO MYSTERIES
TO BE SOLVED. ?

OH, NO, DARLING,
THIS HOUSE IS THE
SAFEST PLACE IN
THE WORLD !



NO INTRUDER
WOULD DARE TO TROUBLE
RAMPLING GATE.





NOTHING TROUBLED THE
SERENITY OF THE DAYS
THAT FOLLOWED.

OUR DISCRETE INQUIRIES
IN THE VILLAGE ALL MET
WITH THE SAME REPLY:
THE VILLAGERS LOVED THE
HOUSE AND CARRIED NO OLD
OR DISQUIETING TALES.

RICHARD AND I WERE BOTH FALLING IN
LOVE WITH THE HOUSE AND THE AREA,
BUT I COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER-



--WHAT HAD SO DISTURBED OUR FATHER ABOUT THIS LOVELY CORNER OF ENGLAND? WHAT HAD SO DARKENED HIS LAST HOURS THAT HE LAID HIS CURSE UPON THIS SPOT?

WE COULD FIND NOTHING AMISS THAT WOULD ILLUMINATE THAT MYSTERY.

NEVER HAD I KNOWN SUCH PEACE AND QUIET, IN FACT-- AND MY WRITING WAS GOING BETTER THAN I EVER EXPECTED.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF RAMPLING
GATE PERMEATED MY SIMPLEST
WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS...



--WEAVING ITS WAY RICHLY INTO THE PLOTS
AND CHARACTERS I CREATED, GIVING THEM
A DEPTH AND REALISM THAT HAD ALWAYS
BEEN LACKING IN MY STORIES.



IN FACT, MY WRITING HAS BEEN GOING SO WELL THAT JUST THIS MORNING--
JUST ONE WEEK SINCE OUR ARRIVAL--I FINISHED MY FIRST SHORT STORY.



I WAS SO PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS THAT
I IMMEDIATELY HEADED TO THE VILLAGE--



--TO BOLDLY POST THE STORY TO THE
EDITORS OF BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.



SEVERAL DAYS LATER--
"HE THINKS THIS IS HIS
HOUSE... HE WOULD DRINK
MY WINE AND SMOKE MY
CIGARS, IF ONLY HE COULD."



"HE READS MY BOOKS AND
PAPERS, AND I WILL NOT
STAND FOR IT."

AND FINALLY THE LAST
ENTRY BEFORE HE DIED--
"LAST NIGHT I BEHELD
HIM WITH MY OWN EYES--
IN THIS VERY ROOM. HE
MOVES AND SPEAKS EXACT-
LY AS A MORTAL MAN."



"HE DARES TO TELL ME
HIS SECRETS--HE IS A
DEVON WRETCH, AND HOW
AM I, A VERE MORTAL,
TO BEAR WITH HIM?"

GOOD
LORD...



COULD IT BE
THE VERY SAME PERSON
FATHER SPOKE OF THAT
NIGHT?



BUT THAT WAS
YEARS BEFORE, RICHARD--
AND THIS TALK OF A SUPER-
NATURAL BEING--

--SURELY UNCLE
BAXTER WAS MAD!
IT WAS NO SPIRIT I
SAW IN THAT RAILWAY
CARRIAGE!

JULIE, MRS. BLESSINGTON HAS LIVED HERE CONTENTEDLY FOR YEARS, AND THERE ARE SIX SERVANTS ASLEEP EVERY NIGHT IN THE NORTH WING. SURELY THERE IS NOTHING TO ALL OF THIS.



PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT-- THIS ISN'T MUCH FUN, IS IT? NOT AT ALL LIKE SWAPPING GHOST STORIES LIKE WE USED TO.



ALL MY LIFE I'VE HEARD TALES OF SPOOKS AND SPIRITS, AND ALMOST INVARIABLY THERE IS SOME MENTION OF THE HOUSE IN QUESTION FEELING HAUNTED..



BUT THERE IS NO SUCH POISONOUS ATMOSPHERE HERE--I LOVE THIS HOUSE!

I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE AT EASE IN MY LIFE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T KNOW HOW IN THE WORLD I'M GOING TO COMPLY WITH FATHER'S LAST WISH TO TEAR THIS PLACE DOWN.



I SHOULD TALK TO MRS. BLESSINGTON AGAIN...



BUT I HAVE, JULIE--I ASKED HER ABOUT IT ALL THIS MORNING WHEN I FIRST MADE THE DISCOVERY, AND SHE ONLY LAUGHED!



SHE SWEARS SHE'S NEVER
SEEN ANYTHING UNUSUAL HERE, AND KNOWS
OF NO ONE IN THE VILLAGE WITH ANY ODD
TALES OF THIS HOUSE, EITHER.



SHE'S SO
GLAD THAT WE'VE COME
HOME, AS SHE PUTS IT, TO
RAMPLING GATE.

I DON'T THINK SHE HAS
AN INKLING THAT WE MEAN TO
DESTROY THE HOUSE--

--IT WOULD
BREAK HER HEART
IF SHE DID!



SHE'S NEVER
SEEN ANYTHING
UNUSUAL?

THOSE
WERE HER EXACT
WORDS?

WHAT A STRANGE
WAY FOR HER TO SAY IT,
RICHARD, WHEN SHE CANNOT
SEE AT ALL!



MAYBE IT'S
GONE, JULIE-- IF IT WAS
EVER HERE.

I DON'T BELIEVE THERE
IS ANYTHING FRIGHTENING
STILL IN THIS HOUSE.



YOU DON'T SUPPOSE YOU
COULD ENDURE THE WINTER IN
THIS HOUSE, DO YOU?



I THINK I'D
LIKE TO STAY HERE
A WHILE.



I KNOW THIS MUCH,
JULIE... I SWORE TO FATHER THAT
I WOULD DO AS HE ASKED, AND IT'S
TEARING ME APART.

EITHER WAY, IT WILL
BE ON MY CONSCIENCE FOREVER—
DO I DESTROY THIS HOUSE, OR
GO AGAINST MY FATHER AND THE
CHARGE HE LAID UPON ME WITH
HIS DYING BREATH?

WE MUST SEEK HELP,
RICHARD— THE ADVICE OF OUR
LAWYERS, AND THE ADVICE OF
FATHER'S CLERGYMEN.

YOU MUST WRITE TO
THEM AND EXPLAIN THE WHOLE
THING. FATHER MUST HAVE BEEN
FEVERISH WHEN HE GAVE THE
ORDER. IF WE COULD LAY IT OUT
BEFORE THEM, THEY WOULD
HELP US DECIDE.



SLEEPLESSNESS.

A SENSE OF VAGUE AND
RESTLESS AGITATION.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT
THIS HOUSE REALLY?

IS IT MERELY A PLACE
OR A STATE OF MIND?

IRRATIONALLY, BOTH RICHARD
AND I HAVE GROWN SO
ATTACHED TO RAMPLING GATE...

BUT WHY HAVEN'T THE ENTRIES IN
UNCLE BAXTER'S LEDGER SENT
US FLYING BACK TO LONDON?





"UNSPEAKABLE HORROR..."







RICHARD, IT WAS HE! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? HE EVEN CALLED ME BY NAME!

BUT HOW COULD IT HAVE BEEN, JULIE?



I HEARD A COMMOTION DOWN HERE-- WHAT IS WRONG?

MY SISTER APPEARS TO HAVE ENCOUNTERED A STRANGE MAN IN THE HOUSE.



OH, NO...

OH, DEAR GOD--WE WAS READING THROUGH YOUR PAPERS, RICHARD.

--HE WAS READING THEM!



THESE ARE YOUR LETTERS TO FATHER'S LAWYERS ABOUT TEARING DOWN THE HOUSE--



TEAR THE HOUSE DOWN! THAT IS WHY YOU CAME HERE?



PLEASE, CALM YOURSELF. WE HAVE DECIDED ON NOTHING YET, MRS. BLESSINGTON.



SURELY
YOU DON'T BELIEVE
IT WAS THE SAME
MAN, JULIE, AFTER ALL
THESE YEARS.

THERE IS NO MISTAKE--
HE HAD NOT CHANGED, EVEN IN THE
SMALLEST DETAIL. IT WAS HE, RICHARD--
THE VERY SAME MAN HE SAW YEARS AGO
AND UNCLE BAXTER WROTE OF!

WHAT
WHO WILL
DO!

SO YOU
KNOW WHO
HE IS!



PLEASE CHILDREN--
YOU MUST PUT AN END TO ALL
OF THIS TALK OF DESTROYING
RAMPLING GATE--

--I DON'T KNOW
WHAT HE WILL DO IF
YOU TRY TO TEAR THIS
HOUSE DOWN!

YOU KNEW HE
WAS HERE, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU MUST TELL US
AT ONCE!



THERE IS **NOTHING**
IN THIS HOUSE TO HURT
YOU, OR ANY OF US.

YOU'VE **NO NEED**
OF ME ANY LONGER--AND IF
YOU TEAR DOWN THIS HOUSE
WHERE YOUR FAMILY HAS
LIVED FOR CENTURIES, THEN
YOU SHOULD DO IT WITHOUT
NEED OF ME.

OH, BUT WE
DON'T **MEAN** TO DO IT,
MRS. BLEGGINGTON!



GO AFTER HER, RICHARD.
YOU HEARD WHAT SHE SAID.
SHE KNOWS WHO HE IS.



I'VE HAD QUITE
ENOUGH OF THIS TONIGHT.
WE SHOULD BOTH GET TO
BED. TOMORROW WE WILL
DISCUSS THIS MATTER
FURTHER AND SEARCH THE
HOUSE. NOW COME.



BUT WE
SHOULD BE TOLD.
SHOULDN'T
WE?

TOLD WHAT?
OF WHOM DO YOU
SPEAK?

HIM! WE
MUST TELL HIM THAT
WE WILL NOT TEAR DOWN
THIS HOUSE!

THE NEXT DAY WAS THE MOST TRYING SINCE WE HAD ARRIVED.



IT TOOK THE BETTER PART OF THE MORNING TO CONVINCE MRS. BLESSINGTON THAT WE HAD NO INTENTION OF TEARING DOWN RAUPLING GATE.

RICHARD POSTED HIS LETTERS TO THE LAWYERS AND RESOLVED THAT WE SHOULD DO NOTHING UNTIL HELP CAME.



TOGETHER, WE COMMENCED A SEARCH OF THE HOUSE.



THE SOUTH WING...

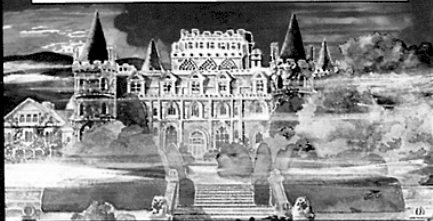
THE SOUTH TOWER...



...AND THE MAIN PORTION OF THE HOUSE ITSELF



DARKNESS FOUND US ONLY HALF FINISHED WITH OUR SEARCH--



--THERE STILL REMAINED THE NORTH TOWER, IN A DREADFUL STATE OF DISREPAIR, AND SEVERAL UNDERGROUND ROOMS WHICH ONCE MIGHT HAVE SERVED AS DUNGEONS, BUT WERE NOW SEALED OFF.



PERHAPS UNCLE BAXTER WAS MAD WHEN HE MADE THOSE LEDGER ENTRIES, AND OUR INTRUDER LAST NIGHT WAS JUST THAT: AN INTRUDER AND NOTHING MORE.

OR PERHAPS YOU WERE OVERWROUGHT BY THIS STRANGE MYSTERY AND IMAGINED IT ALL, JULIE.

THEN WHY DID MRS. BLESSINGTON SAY THE THINGS SHE SAID? AND WHY ISN'T SHE OR ANY OF THE OTHER SERVANTS AFRAID OF HIM?



PLEASE DO ONE VERY IMPORTANT THING FOR ME BEFORE YOU RETIRE TONIGHT, RICHARD--

--LEAVE A WRITTEN NOTE ON THE DESK STATING THAT YOU DO NOT INTEND TO DESTROY THE HOUSE.

JULIE, YOU HAVE CREATED AN IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMA: YOU INSIST THAT WE REASSURE THIS APPARITION THAT THE HOUSE WILL NOT BE DESTROYED--

--WHEN IN FACT YOU VERIFY THE EXISTENCE OF THE VERY CREATURE THAT PROVE FATHER TO SAY WHAT HE DID!



OH, I WISH I HAD NEVER COME HERE!

THEN WE SHOULD GO, BOTH OF US, AND DECIDE THIS MATTER AT HOME IN LONDON.

BUT THAT'S JUST IT. I COULD NEVER GO WITHOUT KNOWING... "HIS SECRETS"... "THE DEMON WRETCH"... I COULD NEVER GO ON LIVING WITHOUT KNOWING.

ANGER MUST BE AN EXCELLENT
ANTIDOTE FOR FEAR, FOR
SURELY SOMETHING WORKED TO
ALLEVIATE MY NATURAL ALARM--



--AND TONIGHT, AS SOON
AS EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP,
I WOULD GET TO THE
BOTTOM OF THIS MYSTERY
ONCE AND FOR ALL.

WHAT IS
YOUR NAME?

AND WHERE
ARE YOU--RIGHT
NOW?



AM I
LOSING MY
MIND?



I'M NOT EVEN
SURE THAT I EVEN HAVE
THE COURAGE TO GO IN
SEARCH OF HIM.





PLEASE KNOW THAT RICHARD AND I MEAN NO HARM TO THIS HOUSE.

WE ONLY SEEK TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS THAT FRIGHTENED OUR FATHER ABOUT THIS PLACE--WHY HE TOLD US TO "TEAR IT DOWN."

YOU MUST NEVER DO THAT.

NO, ABSOLUTELY. WE DON'T WANT TO EITHER OF US.

I MUST BE DREAMING! I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE REAL!

OH, BUT I AM.

I AM HERE, AND YOU ARE HERE WITH ME, JULIE...

JUST A
LITTLE KISS,
JULIE.

I MEAN YOU
NO HARM.





WHAT ARE
YOU ? YOU'RE NOT
HUMAN !



FATHER WAS
RIGHT: SOMETHING OF
MENACE. UNSPEAKABLE
MENACE !

SOMETHING
ANCIENT, JULIE.
SOMETHING THAT DEFIES
UNDERSTANDING--SOME-
THING THAT CAN AND
WILL GO ON.



BUT
WHY--WHAT ARE
YOU ?



AND YET, YOU
ARE SO SEEMINGLY
INNOCENT, AND YOU
SUFFER SO--ALMOST
AS IF YOU CAN
LOVE !

COME
WITH ME,
JULIE--

--AND I
WILL EXPLAIN ALL
THAT I CAN.





THIS IS THE NORTH
TOWER—THE ABANDONED
PORTION OF THE HOUSE
THAT RICHARD AND I HAVE
NOT INVESTIGATED YET.



YES, AND HIS
FATHER BEFORE HIM
AND ALL OF THEM IN AN
UNBROKEN CHAIN OVER
THE YEARS.

MY
FATHER KNEW
WHAT YOU WERE,
DIDN'T HE?

OUT OF
LONELINESS OR RAGE,
I KNOW NOT WHICH, I
ALWAYS TOLD THEM.
I ALWAYS MADE THEM
ACKNOWLEDGE, AND
ACCEPT.

I WOULD
NEVER WARM YOU,
OR ANY OF THE
CHILDREN OF THIS
HOUSE.

JUST THE LITTLE
KISS, JULIE, AND THE
UNDERSTANDING THAT IT
IMPARTS, AND BINDS
YOU TO ME--

--THAT YOU CANNOT DESTROY
RAMPLING GATE, AND THAT YOU CAN
NEVER, NEVER DRIVE ME AWAY.



NOW.

BEAR
WITNESS THAT
IS ALL I ASK
OF YOU...



IT WAS THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1347, AND I WAS STILL
A YOUNG, LIVING MAN, IN THE VILLAGE OF KNOWWOOD
--WHERE RAMPLING VILLAGE NOW STANDS TODAY.



AN INQUISITIVE LAD, I SPENT
MUCH OF MY TIME EXPLORING
THE AREA AROUND MY VILLAGE.





I CAN VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE DAY WHEN, LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, I DECIDED TO VISIT THE RUINED OLD CASTLE ON THE HILL, OVERLOOKING THE VILLAGE.



REPUTED TO BE HAUNTED, THE OLD STRUCTURE WAS FORBIDDEN --OFF-LIMITS TO THE VILLAGE CHILDREN, UNDER PENALTY OF A SEVERE BEATING.



ON THAT ILL-FATED DAY, HOWEVER, MY CURIOSITY FINALLY OVERCAME ME...

AS THOUGH
DRAWN TO THIS PLACE,
I FORCED MYSELF TO
ENTER--

--AGAINST
MY FEARS



THE STRUCTURE WAS ANCIENT,
AND APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN
UNINHABITED FOR MANY,
MANY YEARS, OR SO I THOUGHT--



--UNTIL I ENCOUNTERED THE
LORD OF THE CASTLE.

A DEAD THING HE WAS,
I UNDERSTOOD, BUT HE
CARRIED WITHIN HIMSELF
A PRICELESS MAGIC.



HIS PRESENCE OVERPOWERED ME, AND I FOUND MYSELF
INEXORABLY DRAWN INTO HIS EMBRACE.



WORRIED BY THE GIFT HE OFFERED, WITH WHAT
STRENGTH OF WILL I HAD REMAINING, I BROKE AWAY--



--AND FLED THE CASTLE AS THOUGH ALL THE DEMONS OF HELL WERE AT MY HEELS.



I THOUGHT THAT I
HAD ESCAPED MY DOOM, BUT
THE CRUEL HAND OF FATE
HAD OTHER PLANS...



NOT TWO YEARS LATER--



--THE BLACK DEATH
CAME TO KNORWOOD.

MY FAMILY--INDEED, THE ENTIRE VILLAGE--WAS DEVASTATED BY THIS MERCILESS SCOURGE.



IT SEEMED LIKE THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD--DEATH SURROUNDED ME EVERYWHERE.



I WAS COBBING, BEGGING TO BE RELEASED--IT SEEMED LIKE THE VERY END OF CREATION ITSELF.

EVENTUALLY, I, TOO, WAS STRUCK DOWN BY THE HORRIBLE AFFLICTION--IT JUST TOOK LONGER WITH ME THAN THE REST.



SUFFERING ALONE, I WAITED TO DIE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.



AS I FELT THE END APPROACHING,
MY THOUGHTS KEPT GOING BACK
TO THAT DAY IN THE ANCIENT
RUIN, AND ITS MYSTERIOUS
OCCUPANT..

--THAT SAME PRICELESS MAGIC
WHICH I HAD SPURNED BEFORE, NOW
SEEMED TO BE MY ONLY HOPE.

BUT HOW
COULD YOU EVEN
CONSIDER.. ?



I STAGGERED UP THE HILL
TOWARDS THE OLD CASTLE.



WITH MY LAST
REMAINING
STRENGTH, I
JUST BARELY
MADE IT.



HOW CAN
YOU ASK ME FOR
SAVATION?

DAMNATION
IS ALL I HAVE TO OFFER
YOU-- THAT IS ALL I HAVE
TO GIVE!

YES, DAMNED,
THEN-- BUT LIVING,
BREATHING!



IF "LIFE" IS
YOUR WISH, THEN
SO BE IT.



THE KISS AGAIN...
THAT LETHAL KISS...



--I COULD FEEL THE
BLOOD DRAWN OUT
OF MY DYING BODY.



UNTIL, AT LAST, AS I
FELT CONSCIOUSNESS
SLIPPING AWAY...



AH, HIS BLOOD!



I HAVE NO WORDS TO
DESCRIBE THE FEELING
AS HIS BLOOD JETTED
INTO MY BODY--

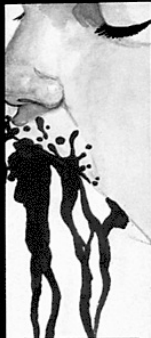
--VANQUISHING, IN ONE
GREAT BURST, THE FEVER
AND SICKNESS THAT
HAD WRACKED MY BODY.



IMMORTALITY WAS NOW MINE, ALONG WITH THE
BLOOD THIRST I WOULD NEED TO SUSTAIN IT--



--AND THAT THIRST I COULD
FEEL WITH MY WHOLE SOUL.



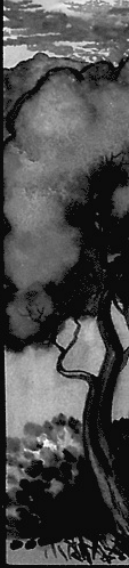
DRIVING IT OUT,
ALONG WITH THE
LAST REMAINING
VESTIGES OF
MY MORTAL LIFE.



YEARS AND YEARS PASSED.

AND ALL THAT HAD BEEN
KNORWOOD MELTED INTO
THE EARTH.

THE FOREST SENT OUT ITS SILENT
SENTINELS, AND MIGHTY TRUNKS ROSE--





--WHERE THERE HAD BEEN HUTS AND
HOUSES, AND WHERE THE WALLS OF THE
ANCIENT CASTLE HAD ONCE STOOD.

AND IT SEEMED THE HORROR
BEYOND ALL HORRORS THAT
NO ONE SHOULD KNOW ANY-
MORE OF THOSE WHO HAD
LIVED AND DIED..



YET ONE
REMAINED WHO
KNEW.

ONE WHO HAD
CLIMBED, TRANSFORMED
FROM THE VERY PIT OF
HELL THAT HAD BEEN
THAT DISASTER.

I WHO
HAD WITNESSED
IT ALL--

--THE COMING
OF YOUR RAMPLING
FAMILY IN THE YEARS
THAT FOLLOWED.

AND SEEING
THEM RAISE THIS HOUSE
UPON THE VERY HILL WHERE
THAT ANCIENT CASTLE
HAD ONCE STOOD.



--AND SEEING A NEW VILLAGE
COLLECT ITSELF SLOWLY UPON THE
UNMARKED GRAVE OF THE OLD.



I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO JOIN
ME IN THIS IMMORTAL EXISTENCE--

--AND INTRODUCE ME TO THIS
MARVELOUS CONTEMPORARY AGE,
SO DIFFERENT FROM THE
WORLD AS I KNEW IT LONG AGO.







DO YOU
UNDERSTAND
WHAT I AM OFFERING
YOU ?

TO YOUR ANCESTORS,
I REVEALED MYSELF. I
SUBJUGATED THEM--



--BUT I WOULD
MAKE YOU MY BRIDE,
JULIE.

I WOULD
SHARE WITH YOU
MY POWER.



COME
WITH ME!

I WILL NOT
TAKE YOU AGAINST YOUR
WILL--BUT CAN YOU TURN
AWAY ?





TWO NIGHTS LATER:

...IT IS AN ELEGANT SOLUTION, JULIE, BUT WHAT CAME OVER YOU? --WHAT CONVINCED YOU SO QUICKLY?

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT RAMPLING GATE IS SAFE, AND WE ARE BOTH HAPPY NOW, DEAR.

AS SOON AS I GET BACK TO LONDON, I'LL CONTACT THE LAWYERS AND HAVE THE TITLE TO RAMPLING GATE TRANSFERRED INTO MY NAME--

--AND NOW THAT YOU'LL BE LEGALLY UNABLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON FATHER'S DEMAND, OUR DILEMMA IS SOLVED.

A CLEVER SOLUTION, SINCE FATHER HAD NOT TOLD ME TO DESTROY THE PLACE I NO LONGER HAD ANY SCRUPLES IN THE MATTER AT ALL.

OF COURSE, I WOULD LEAVE THE HOUSE TO RICHARD'S MALE HEIRS-- IT SHOULD ALWAYS REMAIN IN RAMPLING HANDS.





I CAN
WAIT--WE'VE
GOT ALL THE TIME
IN THE WORLD,
NOW.



IT'S
FIVE HOURS TO
LONDON.

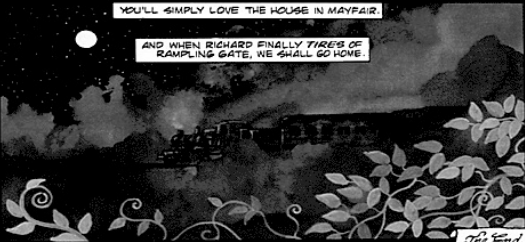
I WANT TO HUNT
THE LONDON STREETS
TONIGHT.

BEAUTIFUL JULIE,
MY JULIE...



YOU'LL SIMPLY LOVE THE HOUSE IN MAYFAIR.

AND WHEN RICHARD FINALLY TIRES OF
RAMPLING GATE, WE SHALL GO HOME.



The End